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U.S. Ambassador and City Imam of Freetown Co-Host Interfaith Iftar Dinner

(FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE) – The Embassy of the United States on August 15 hosted an interfaith Iftar dinner at the Presidential Lounge of the National Stadium in Freetown. The event was attended by 100 guests of diverse religious backgrounds. Guests included several high ranking leaders from the Government of Sierra Leone, the diplomatic and consular corps and civil society.

The dinner was also co-hosted by the City Imam of the Freetown Municipality Sheikh Abu Bakarr Conteh. Dr. Ramadan Jalloh presented on “The Concept of Tolerance.”

The topic of tolerance was also at the heart of remarks made by U.S. Ambassador Michael Owen, who reflected on the universal values of peace, tolerance and brotherhood. Ambassador Owen said these values are not just Islam values but ones that “endure in all of us – no matter our religious beliefs and identification.”

He also spoke about the long history of cooperation between Sierra Leone and the United States and commended Sierra Leone for being an “effective model for the world of how people of all faiths can live together in peace and harmony.” He extended warm wishes to Sierra Leoneans observing the Holy Month of Ramadan.

On August 10, U.S. President Barack Obama also hosted an Iftar dinner at the White House. In his remarks, President Obama talked about the extraordinary courage of Muslim women during the Arab Spring, young Muslims in the United States, and contributions that Muslim Americans have made. He referred to religious freedom as “not just an American right; it is a universal human right” and said the United States “will draw on the strength and example of our interfaith community” to defend the freedom of religion.

This is the tenth year that the U.S. Embassy has hosted an Iftar dinner in Sierra Leone.